

February 2, 2009

Dear Committee Members:

I would like to express my support for HB 382, An Act Creating a Resident Apprentice Hunting Certificate. I am a veteran educator of twenty-five years. I have been a general education classroom teacher, special education teacher and also an administrator of special education for eight years. I am a hunter safety instructor with thirty-four years of service. I have certified hundreds of students in many different communities throughout Montana during that time. I have been able to witness firsthand the decline in our number of students that are able to attend a Hunter Education Class.

It has become apparent that the number of hunters, particularly young hunters, has declined in Montana. Expectations place on our youth today far exceed what most of us had growing up. Sports are no longer just played during that season, school demands have increased at most schools in regards to number of credits needed to graduate, board required homework policies, and other factors. Home situations have changed drastically also. More single parent households, if both parents are home they are both working, many children need to work in order to survive, and the advent of other indoor activities has curtailed the desire to be outdoors. If we do not engage our kids at a younger age than twelve, we will not instill the desire to participate in our outdoor activities such as hunting. Our kids are growing up much faster today than even twenty years ago. It is imperative that we offer them a chance to participate in actively hunting with a mentor in full control. I could relate story after story of our youth not wanting to hunt because of the lack of time, they would make the time if they had been hooked on hunting at a younger age. That has also been shown over and over again.

I do differ in several areas of this proposed bill;

- I would like to see the exemption for only three years not the five as written in the bill.
- I would like to see the exemption only apply to those that are 21 or younger.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 382 and the above recommendations that I have suggested. Even without the above exceptions I am compelled to support this bill as it will benefit the youth of our state, my primary concern. I apologize that I am unable to attend this hearing in person but family matters have prevented me from that. If I can be of further service please do not hesitate to contact me at 406-868-3824.

Sincerely,

Drew Uecker
Hunter Safety Instructor #20935